

The God of Judgment

Malachi 2:17

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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

I. Introduction and Background:

Today's text is taken from the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi. Malachi was the last prophet prior to John the Baptist who would not arrive on the scene until some 350-400 years later to herald the arrival of Jesus Christ. Malachi prophesies of their coming. And God through Malachi calls the Jews in Judah to repentance – a call that is certainly relevant to our generation as well.

In reading through Malachi, you will find an interesting pattern in his prophecy. God, through the Prophet, issues a series of indictments against Judah expressing His great displeasure with them, and particularly in the practice of their religion. And upon each occasion, the people respond saying, “Wherein, or wherefore, or why do you say that to us? How does your accusation apply to us religious folks?” Each time it's as if they are saying, to Malachi, “You've got this all wrong. You must have us confused with the heathen.” And sadly, most of so-called “Christianity” in our day responds in a similar fashion as they unwittingly remain in their natural born ignorance of God and His gospel – the good news of how God saves sinners based solely on the doing and dying of Christ in their place.

II. I counted at least 7 occasions in the 4 chapters of Malachi where such a discourse took place (an indictment is leveled against them followed by a reply of puzzlement). We won't review all 7 of these exchanges, but let's look at a few so you can see this pattern for yourself. For example...

A. Malachi 1:6b-8: Look at the first such accusation and their response to it in chapter 1, beginning at the end of verse 6. God is rebuking the priests, saying, “...*O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? ⁷Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. ⁸And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.*” God had been very specific in the law He gave to Moses and now they had compromised that by not bringing the unblemished sacrifices as commanded – sacrifices intended to picture the perfection of the unblemished, sinless, eternal Lamb of God – Jesus Christ. So we see that the Jews continued in the sincere practice of religion, but just as is true of much religion in our day – there was no evidence of a God-given understanding as demonstrated by their very religious practices having degraded into that which dishonored and displeased God.

B. Malachi 2:13-14a: As we get into chapter 2, in verse 13, God cites how they covered the altar with tears, crying out. So clearly, a lack of sincerity was not their problem. God tells them that due to their perverted religious practices, that He does not regard their offering any more – that He will not receive it. And in verse 14 they again reply, “Wherefore? Why don’t you receive that which we offer?” In our day, people often reply to the distinctive message of God’s Gospel of sovereign grace in Christ in much the same fashion saying, “I don’t see the big deal or how your Gospel is any different from that which I believe.”

C. Malachi 2:17: Now the next similar exchange (where the indictment or charge is made, followed by puzzled reply) takes place in verse 17 of chapter 2 which I’ve chosen as my text for today. There we read, “*Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?*” The Hebrew word for “judgment” here is a word that can be translated “justice,” or doing “right” – or the God of “righteousness.”

III. 2 Perspectives on Malachi 2:17: Now there are 2 ways in which we can rightly consider this verse.

A. As an accusation made against God: First, it can be considered as an accusation that they are making against God. Things weren’t going well for Judah at this time. While they were no longer in captivity, they were under foreign domination and rule. They were enduring a prolonged drought and famine in their land. On the other hand, other heathen nations were prospering. In essence, this is a complaint lodged against God, accusing Him of favoring the wicked (wicked in their eyes) as if He delights in those who do evil rather than themselves (who they believed were doing good). So they complain, “Where is the God of judgment? He should do right and punish these others.”

Our natural tendency to complain about undesirable circumstances reflects our own self-righteousness as we think, this or that shouldn’t be happening to me. And that is natural for us because until God is pleased to show us otherwise and convince of sin, we don’t really believe the truth of Romans 3:12b where we’re told, “...*there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*” With an inflated opinion of our own goodness, we tend to imagine that we deserve better. What God calls evil is evil and what God calls good is good. Goodness is measured by God’s standard and as we often review from Acts 17:31, God tells us the standard by which we all will be judged – the very perfect righteousness rendered by the obedience and death of Jesus Christ. Anything short of that deserves God’s wrath. Here’s what you and I deserve, what we all earn as sinners, “*The wages of sin is death.*” (Romans 6:23a).

In preparing this message, I listened to an excellent sermon by Bill Parker on this passage and he made the case very well for this sense of Malachi 2:17, showing how it was in keeping with the verses that follow in chapter 3. Look at chapter 3, down at verses 13-15 with me. There we read, ***“Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? <Again here we see an indictment made and the incredulous reply – What have we said against you?> ¹⁴Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts? <We serve God and get nothing for it.> ¹⁵And now we call the proud happy; <they prosper> yea, they that work wickedness are set up; <set for life> yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.”***

This reminds me of those who hear the Gospel of God’s sovereign grace wherein we hear how all of salvation is conditioned solely on Christ – that it is truly out of our hands – and frequently we hear in response something like this: “If I believed like you, I’d give up worship and go live like the devil” – in essence saying if I’m not going to get something for efforts to please God – if God isn’t going to save me in return for my faith or my dedicated, sincere worship – why bother? Many religious folks read the same Bible and hear the truth of God’s sovereignty as He says of Himself in Isaiah 46:10b, ***“...My counsel <that’s God’s purpose contrived by His infinite wisdom – His counsel...> shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:”*** or as He says of those who are saved in Ephesians 1:11, how that in Christ, they have obtained an inheritance, ***“...being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:”*** And yet while many claim to believe God’s Word, they choose not to believe what He says here as they insist that their eternal inheritance, their salvation, is owing to their own free will decision, not God’s sovereign will and purpose. So their response in essence communicates the same as I just read from Malachi 3:14, “If I believed that, it would be vain for me to serve that God.”

No doubt, this sense of Malachi 2:17, seeing it as an accusation of injustice they were making against God in how He dealt with men and women providentially in the circumstances of their lives, is valid. It makes sense in the context.

- B. As a mistaken assessment of themselves: But I want to spend the rest of our time this morning, considering Malachi 2:17 from a different perspective, but one that also makes sense and is certainly compatible with what we’ve considered so far. Look at that verse again where we read, ***“Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?”***

Consider how this verse can also be understood to be the Jews saying (or saying in their minds – not necessarily spoken words) – thinking that what they were doing was good and acceptable in the sight of God. But God through His prophet tells them they are mistaken – that God is weary and displeased in that He sees it as evil.

In other words that which God says is evil – they call ‘good’ and imagine that God delights in them. Clearly their incredulous responses to these charges delivered by Malachi reveals their mistaken assessment of themselves, particularly in the practice of their religion. They presumed God was pleased with the lame and blind animals they were offering in sacrificial worship, that He delighted in this, their practice of religion.

Now that sense of this verse is equally valid in that it reflects the natural spiritual blindness of all sinners according to the whole of scripture – the deadly, mistaken self-assessment of our own condition which we will blindly persist in unless and until God is pleased to deliver us with the God-given eyes of faith to see differently and repent. And as we consider this verse, not only as an accusation being made by them against God, but also as God’s declaration of their being mistaken in their own self-assessment of their state and condition before God, then the last phrase might well be an expression of Malachi’s dismay at how they had it all wrong. One commentator I read, said it may well be understood as an exclamation as if Malachi was saying, “Oh my – where is the God of judgment, of justice, of righteousness of which they clearly showed no regard for.

Remember the 1st charge in Chapter 1 where God rebuked the priests (the leaders of their worship). They were bringing tainted sacrifices which did not accurately represent Jesus Christ, the spotless Lamb of God, whom those sacrifices were to picture. When I studied this, it reminded me of those who in recent years promoted the heresy that Christ actually became contaminated by sin, becoming a sinner Himself within. God through Malachi said He wouldn’t accept their contaminated sacrifices because they perverted the unblemished, eternal sacrifice He intended for them to represent. God wouldn’t accept unblemished animals even as a type or picture of Christ. So don’t dare approach the judgment offering up the equivalent of a blemished sacrifice, trusting in a “jesus” you imagine became a sinner within. That’s what Paul called “another Jesus” – not our dear Savior. As we see from Malachi’s day, God will not accept it.

And when the Jews were told that by Malachi, they were incredulous, saying in essence, “What’s the big deal?” And that mindset is reflected in many of the religious practices of our day. Their misrepresentation of what was to be pictured in the sacrifice, reminded me how many show a similar lack of understanding of that which is represented in the New Testament ordinances of the Lord’s Table and the water baptism of believers.

For example, it’s not uncommon for folks to presume to be honoring God by observing the Lord’s Table while having substituted grape juice and soda crackers in the place of the wine and unleavened bread that was prescribed. And if that describes any of you who hear this message then I imagine you’re thinking as I once did – “What’s the big deal? We’re just using some different elements to represent the same thing – Christ’s shed blood and broken body.”

Well just as with the Jews bringing tainted sacrifices, this is contrary to God's command and His specific instructions are not given frivolously. God is all wise and there is infinite wisdom behind all His commands and instructions. Fermented wine does not spoil and it symbolizes the incorruptible, everlasting, blood of Christ. Unfermented grape juice spoils and so the intended remembrance of the everlasting righteousness brought in by the shedding of that blood is lost when the ordinance is observed in that way.

Likewise, leaven in the Bible is used as a symbol of sin. And a holy God will not commune with sin. As Paul told the church at Corinth, “...***Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?***” (I Cor. 5:6b). So for God to be the God of judgment, to do justice, there would have to be a perfect, sinless sacrifice – unblemished, with no sin as represented by no leaven. And so scripture instructs us to use unleavened bread representing the Lord Jesus Christ who knew no sin. As we read in I Peter 1:19, saved sinners are redeemed “...***with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.***” As we're taught in Hebrews 7:26b, the Mediator, the high priest that we needed was “...***holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,...***” Soda crackers are not unleavened bread and so the intended remembrance of the spotless Lamb of God, whose body was offered as a sinless sacrifice for the sins of others, is lost when the ordinance is observed in that way.

There are some who profess to be of the Christian faith who fail to follow the Biblical ordinance of believer's baptism by immersion in water. Some sprinkle water on their members and call that baptism. Others use that same practice on infants. And again, many would say, “What's the big deal?” Well in baptism we are professing something – and it's our identity with Christ who was buried and then rose again for our justification. And so it's a profession that our entire hope is wrapped up in our union with Him and what He accomplished for us – buried with Him as pictured in our immersion in the water and we arise from the water just as we are arisen in Him to live spiritually and will arise to live eternally. Our entire salvation is all owing to our oneness with Him – our Representative and Substitute in what was accomplished by His death, burial, and resurrection. Now I know that some who baptize infants suggest that is representing something different – as in the dedication of the child perhaps. But that's not what the ordinance of baptism is intended to acknowledge according to the Bible. The sprinkled infant has no clue what is happening to them so there is no profession of their faith and confidence in their union with Christ in His justice-satisfying cross work. That practice misrepresents the profession intended by the ordinance of baptism.

In Malachi's day, I suspect that the mockery of God made by the perversion of the sacrificial system had gradually developed to that awful state, their ignorance likely being compounded over time as they too adopted the evolving traditions of those who came before them.

So what's the big deal? The incredulous replies of the Jews showed that they didn't see a big deal in having substituted lame animals for the unblemished sacrifices they were instructed to bring. But it is a big deal because God calls it a big deal and His assessment is the only one that will ultimately matter. God told them He would not accept it. As in the religious practices of our day, they had taken that which was sanctified (set apart) by God, that which He highly regards and which was intended to honor Him, and they made it common. And so He has no regard for it. It is not acceptable in His sight.

Now many do agree with what I've said about the elements of the Lord's Table and water baptism, but regardless, these are only symptoms of the underlying problem. The problem in Malachi's day stems from the same one we all start out with as spiritually dead sinners – we must be given spiritual life. Our initial spiritual blindness is even reflected in our first serious religious thoughts as we begin to ponder how we might be saved, asking ourselves the natural question, “What do I need to do to gain eternal life?” – a question that reflects a mistaken assessment of ourselves – imagining that there is something that me, a sinner, can do to be found accepted before a holy God. And while thinking that way, we may become steeped in religion, and in our sincere attempts to worship God. But in the blindness of that lost state it isn't the substance (or the Gospel doctrine) that really matters to us. For many, it's not what (or in whom) they believe but that they just believe something, perhaps something pertaining to Jesus. They reason, it's okay if you believe this and I believe that. And there are non-vital things on which believers may disagree, but the saved believe the same Gospel. There is a tendency to judge ourselves as “good” and acceptable in God's sight because we know our intentions are good and we know we're sincere. But where in all of that is the God of the Bible – the God of judgment, of justice, of righteousness? That last phrase of Malachi 2:17, “Where is the God of judgment?” sums up the problem which is why I chose this particular verse to focus on today. From our self-absorbed perspective, our thoughts center on ourselves and our doings – including our religious doings. So the particular ways in which we observe ordinances or far more importantly, the issues of our doctrine, what we believe, (which gets to the core of the problem) are secondary to us, if they are important to us at all.

As I've shared with you, I was recently invited to speak before a religious group of men from a denomination I knew held doctrine contrary to ours and so I initially expressed my reluctance to accept their invitation, as I thought it would be inappropriate to blindsides them without forewarning them of our differences. But they insisted in spite that so I went. And as I was being introduced by the one who had invited me, he shared my initial reluctance with the audience and then proudly announced how he had told me “Don't worry about believing different doctrine. I told Randy that doctrine really doesn't matter to us.” And that seemed to be the consensus of everyone there. But we had better quit reasoning from man's perspective up and instead see what God has to say. In 2 John 9 we're told, “***Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.***” Doctrine better matter to you and it better be the doctrine of Christ.

And so let's consider the vital doctrine of Christ – of God's Gospel by looking at the God of the Bible – the God of judgment, or of justice, of righteousness – the knowledge of God that was sorely missing in the religion of the Jews in Malachi's day just as it is missing among countless professing "Christians" in our day. God's Gospel focuses our attention on the character and glory of God, not on what we feel we need or on how religiously sincere we are. To assess ourselves as okay and acceptable before God because we know we are sincere about our religion – if that's the basis of that judgment – that is to be sincere, but sincerely wrong and tragically mistaken. The question to consider is not, "Am I sincere enough?" It is not, "Have I accepted Jesus?" But rather it is, "How can a holy God accept me, a sinner, and still be just and righteous in doing so? God's Gospel answers this question.

IV. The God of Judgment: Where is the judgment, justice or righteousness of God? It is revealed in the Gospel as we often quote from Romans 1:16-17 how the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation because therein is the righteousness of God revealed. If your faith knows nothing of the righteousness of God of which Paul writes here, then it is cannot be God's Gospel. That would be false faith in a false gospel, not true, God-given faith and that makes this important!

- A. Now you often hear a good definition of the righteousness of God from this pulpit. It's summed up by Paul in Romans 10:4 where He declares that "***Christ is the end*** <or the fulfillment> ***of the law for righteousness.***" You often hear us put it this way: that righteousness means perfect satisfaction to God's law and justice as we refer to that which Christ accomplished in fulfillment of all that God requires to save those for whom He lived and died. Sometimes I think we hear such phrases so often that perhaps we don't stop and really consider their meanings as we should. But this is too important of a subject and it is so absent from most pulpits in our day that it always bears repeating in my opinion. So bear with me again today as I do so.
- B. In our Lord's walk on earth, He did perfectly satisfy the Law of Moses, the Old Covenant law which was abolished at that time by Christ's fulfillment of it and of all that it pictured of His saving work. But if we think more broadly of the law as being all that which a holy God requires in the way of obedience, then we know that would speak of a perfection that goes far beyond the keeping of the letter of that temporal law given to Israel. I'm speaking of the need for all of God's revealed will to be perfectly complied with without fail as being the righteousness we need. Jesus Christ is the only person to ever walk this earth in perfect compliance with the Father's will, far more than just His obedience to the Mosaic Law. But as Christ taught in the Sermon on the Mount, the obedience demanded by God goes to the heart and the motive – our very thoughts. And being holy, God requires uninterrupted perfection both in thought, motive, and deed – a perfection that no sinner can produce. We're commanded to love God perfectly and our neighbors (which include our worst enemies) as we do ourselves. Being sinners, you and I can't do that!

- C. It may help some to better understand the phrase, “satisfaction to law and justice” by considering how that might be applied to the civil laws of this land. For example, when you drive on our roadways, the law says that you must maintain a speed lower than that which is posted as the speed limit. If you exceed that limit you are guilty of speeding – of breaking that law. If you’re not speeding, you are innocent, not guilty of breaking that law at that particular time. So how is that law satisfied? Certainly it is satisfied by your obedience – by remaining under the legal speed limit. So law and justice are satisfied in precept when it is obeyed or complied with.
- D. But how can law and justice be satisfied if you disobey it and get pulled over for speeding. A ticket is issued and there is a penalty which must be paid. But once the fine has been paid as prescribed by the law, law and justice once again has been satisfied. You don’t owe a debt to justice anymore if the prescribed penalty has already been paid in full for your crime.
- E. Now when you see a speed limit sign it provides you the standard by which the law will judge whether or not you are speeding – whether you are innocent or guilty. And in Acts 17:31, God provides us the standard by which we shall all be eternally judged. And that standard is the righteousness of Christ – His perfect satisfaction to the Father’s holy law and inflexible justice. To be not guilty before our holy God, you must possess a righteousness equal to that of the sinless Lord of glory. That verse couldn’t make this any clearer.
- F. Sin is the transgression or breaking of God’s law and of that we all are guilty. There is sin in the best prayer I pray, in the kindest act of charity, in the best that I can do and in all that I do. We sin and that continually. Now you might occasionally speed and not get caught, but God, the Judge of all, knows all and sees all and knows your every thought. The Bible teaches that if we hold the least ill will toward our worst enemy at any point in time, we fail to comply with God’s holy requirement of righteousness and thereby we sin. And the penalty due unto our guilt is eternal death as we read in Romans 6:23a – “...*the wages of sin is death;*” If you have a job you are paid a wages – it is what you have earned. You deserve it for the work you’ve done. And all that we sinners can earn for ourselves before God is just that – death. That’s what we deserve. God tells us in His word that He will not clear the guilty. That is, as a God of judgment, justice, righteousness, He doesn’t overlook our sins. His holy justice must be served. That’s why He sent His Son as a Savior – to die, the just dying for the unjust that God might receive all the glory in their salvation.
- G. God the Father imputed or charged to God the Son the guilt due unto all the sins of all whom He chose unto salvation in Christ from before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). Christ willingly took on that responsibility as their Surety, in essence saying, “Put their sins on My account.” And He walked on this earth not for Himself, but as their Representative, their Substitute, their Surety. He obeyed the Father perfectly for them and thereby the precept of God’s law was satisfied on their behalf. God graciously imputed the merit of that which He accomplished, righteousness, to His dear children. Merit...

- H. Robert shared this illustration with me the other day. The Boy Scouts award merit badges. It's what the kids earn for having learned and demonstrated a degree of mastery in a given area. E.g. – they can earn a fishing merit badge by meeting the list of requirements which would include demonstrating their ability to tie a hook on a line using various types of knots. So when we speak of the righteousness of God as all of the merit of His life and death, we're simply talking about that which Christ earned for His adopted children by His obedience and death on the cross – eternal life and every blessing associated with it, including the gift of faith by which we come to know and submit to Christ and His righteousness as our only hope. That which He established, righteousness, is imputed or credited to the accounts of all He came to save. We do nothing to earn that “merit badge” so to speak. He earned it all.
- I. But those for whom He lived and died were still sinners – law breakers. As sinners, we can't earn or merit anything before God. Instead we can only produce demerit. (*Elaborate – on how works of a believer are found acceptable*). When I was in school they used to give out so many “demerits” (as they were called) for misbehaving or breaking rules. And once you accumulated a certain number of “demerits,” then you received punishment in some form – such as having to stay after school in detention or whatever. So saved sinners can't earn anything for themselves. Instead, they have demerit because they deserve punishment – that's all we sinners can earn. As I like to repeat so often the truth of 2 Cor. 5:21, Christ died for imputed sins – sins He had no part in producing that those for whom He died would have His perfect righteousness which they had no part in producing. That's good news to a sinner in desperate need of God's mercy and grace.
- J. So those who are saved have what His obedience earned for them. But what about that which they deserve due to their guilt? How are the penal demands due to God's law and justice satisfied? We've done the crime, somebody's got to do the time (or pay the fine) for God's holy justice to be served. God does not look over sin as if He pretends it didn't happen. And the penalty for sin is death. Sadly, many will suffer just that, eternal death, if they persist in unbelief of this Savior as set forth in this Gospel wherein we see the God of judgment – where His righteousness is revealed. But for those who are saved, Jesus Christ paid the debt due to their sins in full by His death on the cross where God's wrath was emptied out against the sins of those Christ came to save. Only the death of One who is sinless and who is both God and man was sufficient to pay the debt due before our infinitely holy God. That's why the separation from God for those who die without Christ is an eternal one. No amount of suffering by a mere sinner can ever pay what is owed to God's holy justice. It took the precious blood of Christ, the God-man, and that got the job done. His dear children for whom He died are declared not guilty, but righteous in Him. To be found in Christ, having His righteousness imputed is to not only be pardoned from the guilt due to my sins, but it is to have all that He earned for me, an eternal inheritance, the entire merit – whereby I am accepted as holy and righteous in the sight of God for all eternity in Jesus Christ, having His very everlasting righteousness made to be mine.

V. Closing: Many in our day prefer to focus on God as a God of love (and He is) – but you really don't know the love of God until you've seen it manifested in the execution of judgment and justice by Christ. As the Apostle John wrote to believers, ***“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”*** (I John 4:10). Propitiation – that is His justice-satisfying, sin-bearing sacrifice that appeased God's wrath for their sins. Not many hear of the God of judgment or justice. But whether you've heard of Him or not – that's who He is. He's there and He is the One on the throne you ultimately will face at the judgment,

In Jeremiah 23:5, we read this prophecy of the coming Messiah and His cross work, ***“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.”*** Salvation is a matter of God's law and justice being satisfied.

Did Christ execute judgment and justice in the earth for you? Well if so, He will reveal it to you by drawing you to submit to His righteousness as set forth in the Gospel – the Gospel that is believed by all who are saved, showing how He can be just and still save otherwise ungodly sinners like you and me. Hear God as He speaks through the prophet in Isaiah 45:21b-22, saying, ***“...and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.”*** ²²***Look unto me, and be ye saved,*** <Who? A just God and a Savior> ***all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”***

Where is the God of judgment? He's seen in Jesus Christ, the Lord our righteousness who executed judgment and justice in the earth by His finished, justice-satisfying work of obedience, an obedience even unto the death of the cross. Therein we behold God in His redemptive glory, how He is both a just God and a Savior. It's all about Him! He receives all glory in the salvation of a sinner.

I pray God has given you faith to look to Christ alone for your salvation so as to behold the God of judgment, a just God and a Savior – His love providing what His holiness and justice demanded. Put your trust in Christ and in the satisfaction to the Father's holy justice that He made, submitting and resting in His imputed righteousness as your sole basis for acceptance with the promised assurance from our Lord Himself that all who truly come to Him, He won't turn away (John 6:37).

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself – the Bible.